

The background of the entire page is a blue-tinted photograph of the United States Capitol building in Washington, D.C. The building's iconic dome and neoclassical architecture are visible, framed by the silhouettes of trees in the foreground.

GSA Multiple Award Schedules Program and Marketing Strategies Training Guide for small business

The General Services Administration
Office of Small Business Utilization

www.gsa.gov/smallbusiness
www.gsa.gov/schedules

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Introduction

The Office of Small Business Utilization (OSBU) is the General Service Administration's (GSA) advocate for small business. We understand the need for information that is clear, practical and specific. Therefore, OSBU developed this document on how to do business with the Federal Government using GSA's Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) Program.

This brochure incorporates suggestions from small business owners, as well as answers to the many questions routinely addressed by our experts in Washington and around the nation. It is our hope that the step-by-step guidance offered within these pages helps small business owners understand the process of obtaining and marketing a contract under the GSA MAS Program.

For the purpose of clarity and understanding, *it is strongly recommended that you read the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) portion of this booklet before covering any other information.*

We are proud to provide this assistance and look forward to your response. Please consider submitting a one to two-paragraph success story identifying how the new brochure and/or any communication you have had with our office, has contributed to your accomplishments. Please send all success stories or questions regarding this document to our office via email through smallbusiness.success@gsa.gov.



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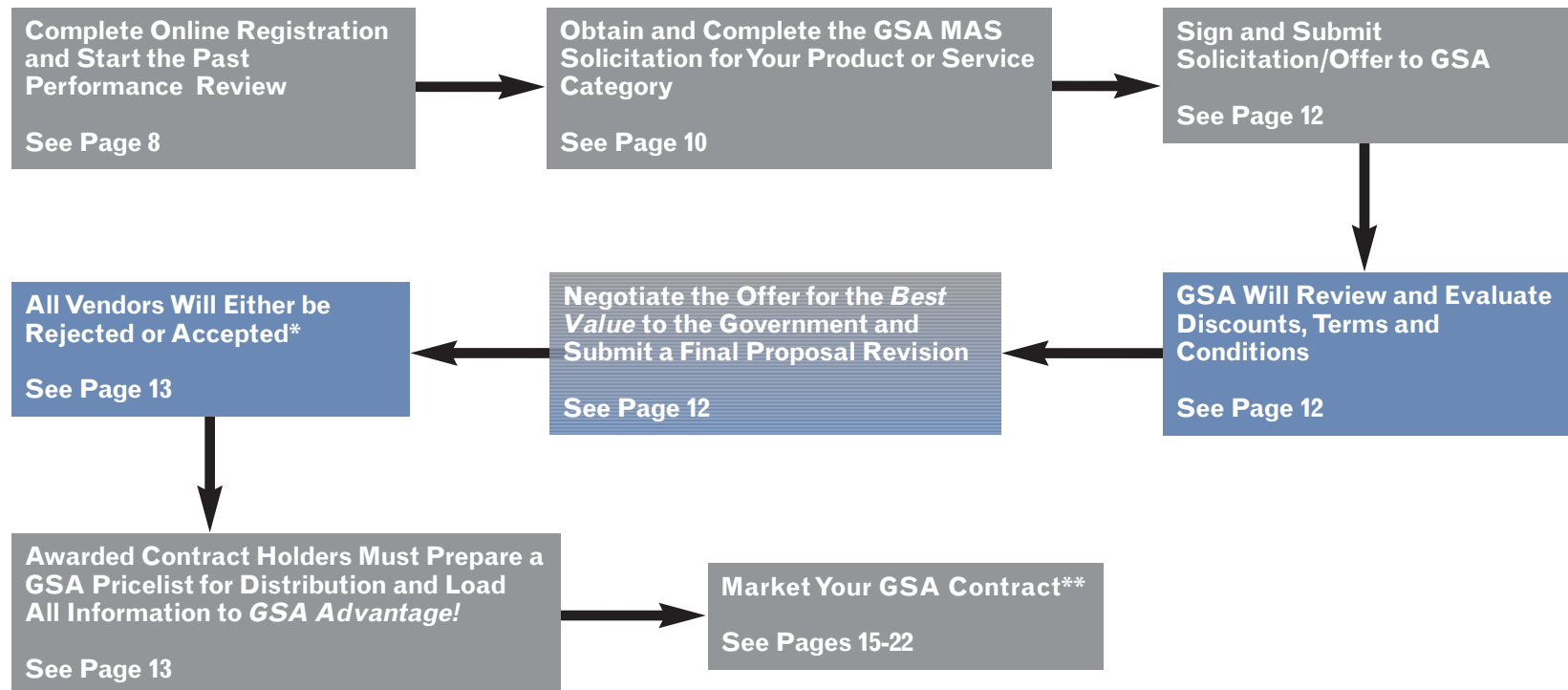
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GSA Multiple Award Schedules Contract Process Flowchart



GSA Multiple Award Schedules Contract Process Flowchart



* An unacceptable offer may be rejected before the negotiation phase. See clause A-FSS-11 in the solicitation.

** Contractors must maintain GSA Schedules Contract sales of \$25,000 or above to participate in the program. A grace period is given during the first 24 months of the contract. (See reference to FC-98-8 on page 9)

Vendor Responsibility

GSA Responsibility



GSA Multiple Award Schedules Step-by-Step Process



Steps to GSA Multiple Award Schedules Contracting

Vendors may seek a contract with the GSA under the MAS program by submitting an offer to the appropriate acquisition office. Each acquisition office represents a different product or service group. Please see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on page 23 for more details.

This section will cover the following basic steps:

YOU: Complete online registrations and start the *Past Performance Review*.

YOU: Obtain and complete the *GSA Schedule Solicitation* for your *product or service category*.

YOU: Sign and submit the *Solicitation/Offer*.

GSA: Review and evaluate your discounts, terms and conditions.

GSA/YOU: Negotiate for *Best Value* to the government.

YOU: Complete negotiations and submit a *Final Proposal Revision*.

GSA: Contracting officer rejects or accepts the offer.

YOU: If rejected, request debriefing within 3 days if needed.

YOU: If accepted, receive a *GSA Contract Number*.

YOU: Load information to *GSA Advantage!*.

YOU: Market your new *GSA Contract Number*.

A. Complete Online Registration and Start Past Performance Review

1. Register your business with all **MANDATORY** entities designed to enhance business opportunities and track procurement data where applicable. Answer the following questions which are designed to help you determine if you have completed these initial steps.

Do you have at least 6 customers to start a Past Performance Review?

- **Past Performance Evaluations** are completed through a private contractor called **Open Ratings Inc.** They will survey your customers and assign a score to your company according to the customer's reply for a nominal fee of \$125.00. This score will be used to compare your past performance with others. www.openratings.com

Open Ratings Inc.
600 First Avenue North, Ste. #200
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701
Customer Service Hotline: (727) 329-1184
Fax: (866) 743-4239, Email: reports@openratings.com

Details:

- Update or obtain Duns and Bradstreet number BEFORE starting this process.
- Provide 6-20 customer contacts.*
- All customers provided MUST have an email address for contacting.
- This report will cost \$125.00 (includes one copy to vendor and one to GSA).

Vendors must provide sufficient past performance information on which contracting officers can make a determination of responsibility IAW FAR Part 9.

* The contracting officer can evaluate past performance information provided by the vendor if an open ratings report cannot be obtained.

The following information is from Federal Supply Service Acquisition Letter FC-98-8, Contract Sales Criteria for GSA Schedule Contracts:

SECTION 3. SALES CRITERIA

3.1 What is the sales criteria for the start up period?

The criteria for canceling contracts due to low dollar sales is revised to allow all new contracts 2 years to exceed \$25,000 in sales. If sales do not exceed \$25,000 within the first 2 years, the contract may be canceled due to low sales. Based on acquisition center research, it takes approximately this length of time to market services and products, establish a name, build relationships, or particularly for services, complete performance on orders.

3.2 What is the on-going sales criteria to retain a contract?

Upon completion of the initial 2-year start up period, contracts that do not exceed \$25,000 in annual sales thereafter should be considered for cancellation.

Are you registered with the CCR?

- **The Central Contractor Registration (CCR)** is the primary vendor database for the U.S. Federal Government. All companies working with the government must be registered. The CCR collects, validates, stores and disseminates data in support of agency acquisition missions. <http://www.ccr.gov/vendor.asp>, 1-888-227-2423, bpnsesupport@dlis.dla.mil

Does your business size fall into a category that needs certification? If yes and you want that category to be identified with your GSA Schedule Contract, please obtain certification before starting this process.

- **The Small Business Administration (SBA)** certifies businesses for disadvantaged, 8(a), and/or HUBZone. All paperwork must be filed through the SBA for business program recognition. www.sba.gov, 1-800-U-ASK-SBA

Do you know your NAICS code?

- **The North American Industry Classification Systems (NAICS)** has replaced the U.S.

Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system. NAICS was developed jointly by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico to provide new comparability in statistics about business activity across North America. All vendors must use the appropriate NAICS code for the product or service they want to offer. <http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html>, 301-763-INFO (4636)

Do you have a Dun and Bradstreet Number? If yes, make sure your information is current.

- **Dun and Bradstreet (D&B)** provides a unique nine-digit identification called a D-U-N-S Number. This number provides a business link for more than 70 million corporate family members around the world. It is recognized and required by the U.S. Federal Government. <http://smallbusiness.dnb.com/default.asp>, (866) 472-7362, sbsSupport@dnb.com

Is your Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA) completed?

- **ORCA** is a Federal mandate requirement for vendors. Details are published in the Federal Acquisition Circular 2001-26, FAR case 2002-024. ORCA was developed as part of the Business Partner Network (BPN), which is a component of the Integrated Acquisition Environment (IAE) E-Gov initiative. www.bpn.gov/orca

B. Obtain and Complete the GSA MAS Solicitations for Your Product and/or Service Category

In some cases you may come across more than one GSA Schedule that seems suitable to your company. If this happens, you may want to apply for more than one contract. You may, however, want to focus on the one GSA Schedule that would be most lucrative and apply for additional GSA Schedule contracts after you obtain your first award. The following instructions will help you with downloading any of the GSA Schedule solicitations:

1. **Identify the GSA Schedule solicitation(s) that MOST closely matches the service/product you wish to offer.**
 - a. Visit www.gsa.gov/elibrary.
 - b. Enter the site.

- c. Type your product/service in the search bar.
- d. Read each description to determine the schedule that matches your product or service.
- e. Click on the **GSA Schedule Number** that matches your description.
- f. Call the number listed for support to verify if you have a good match.
- g. Click on the hyperlink that says “View Solicitation” on Fedbizopps.
- h. **IF** this does not link you to an actual solicitation, you will need to call the representative listed at the top of the webpage and request support.

2. Once on Fedbizopps, you will need to download the solicitation. You may fill out the document on your computer. Please see details in your solicitation for submission directions as they may vary between products and services.

3. Specific questions regarding your offer and any details for your particular product or service should be directed to the acquisition office. The directions below will help you identify the support person in that office.

- a. Locate the Standard Form 1449.
- b. Find block 7a and b on the form.
- c. A name or title and number should be listed for you to call and ask questions. If this is not available, please call the contact listed in 1(h) of these directions.

Special Note: The GSA Schedule award process may take up to 120 days or longer from the date of submission—depending on the accuracy of your offer. Once a contract is awarded, the contract term for performance may extend **up to** 20 years (5 **base** years with **potential for** three 5-year options). Options are not guaranteed and exercising any option periods should be mutually beneficial.

C. Sign and Submit Solicitation/Offer to GSA

The Solicitation from GSA will be considered your Offer once you put it in the mail and send it to the agency even though it is the same document. Please review the **Standard Form 1449** in the GSA Schedule Solicitation. In block 30 a and b at the bottom of the form you will need to have the person legally able to enter the company in a contract, sign and date the document. In block 9a of the Standard Form 1449, you will find the address where you need to mail your offer.

D. GSA will Review and Evaluate the Discount, Terms and Conditions of your offer

GSA will review your offer to make sure you have completed all the information required and that you have offered a basic discount that is comparable to your **Most Favored Customer (MFC)**. The MFC is the customer you are currently giving your highest discount. Generally, contracting officers determine whether prices are fair and reasonable by comparing a company's prices, discounts, terms and conditions offered with what they currently provide to their commercial customers. The negotiations are based on the vendors commercial sales. In order to determine the negotiation objective, GSA reviews the vendors commercial pricelist and pricing/discounting practices.

E. Negotiate the Offer for the *Best Value* to the Government

Once the offer has been reviewed and analysis made regarding the discounts, terms and conditions, GSA will set up a time to negotiate the offer. A **Final Proposal Revision** will be requested at the conclusion of the negotiations. This document will state the final offer including concessions, additional discounts or other changes. Award or Rejection, at this point in the process, will be based on this final offer.

F. Offers Will Either be Rejected or Accepted

Rejection: Any company with a rejected offer may request a debriefing immediately upon notification to determine why the offer was not acceptable for award by GSA. Since GSA Schedule contracts are open continuously, you may make corrections and re-submit your offer at any time as a new application. Upon a new submission, the award process will usually take 120 days.

Acceptance: If the award is accepted, GSA will provide a contract number to the vendor, along with a copy of the contract.

G. Awarded Contract Holders Must Prepare a GSA Pricelist for Distribution and Load All Information to *GSA Advantage!*

Your GSA Pricelist is the negotiated version of your commercial pricelist with discounts included. This is the pricelist you will provide to government customers who are seeking to procure your products or services under the GSA Schedules Program. See your GSA contract for pricelist format and other directions.

GSA Advantage! is our online shopping center for all government customers. It is mandatory and advantageous for all GSA Contractors to load their information to the system upon award. It is also required that all GSA Contractors maintain the updates necessary to keep this information accurate at all times. Please visit www.gsaadvantage.gov.

You will also want to visit the vendor support center at www.gsa.gov/vsc and e-Buy www.gsa.gov/e-Buy for additional contracting support and benefits.

H. Market Your GSA Contract

Please see “Marketing Strategies & Technologies” section of this Guide.



Marketing Strategies and Techniques



Marketing Your New GSA Contract

Providing personal representation and knowledge of FAR Subpart 8.4 are the keys to your success as a Government supplier. A basic understanding of the agencies requiring your products and services, their internal organization and knowing how to market to them will make it easier to identify and pursue contracting opportunities with the government. Regional Small Business Utilization Centers (SBUCs) should be your first point of contact. Representatives will provide information to help you market to Government contracting offices and help you take advantage of special marketing events sponsored by GSA.

Tips for “Increasing Your Bottom Line”

Small businesses are striving more than ever to change the standards of expectation in the Federal market. These businesses are keenly aware that the key to satisfying customers is exceeding the customer's expectation. The following tips will give you a good start in doing just that:

- **Provide quality products and services**
- **Obtain SBA Certification for all eligible programs, such as:**
 - 8(a)
 - HUBZone
 - Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB)
- **Access to the Internet is MANDATORY!**
- **Develop an effective marketing plan**
- **Identify business type on brochures and business cards**
- **Have multiple contracting vehicles in place (see FAQs on pages 23-40), such as:**

- Government Wide Acquisition Contracts (GWACs)
- GSA Schedule Contracts
- Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs)
- Micro-purchase/simplified acquisitions
- Private sector contracts
- **Accept the Government's purchase card for orders under and over the micro-purchase threshold (\$2,500)** (This is a mandatory requirement under the GSA Schedules Program)
- **Accept electronic funds transfer (EFT)**
- **Monitor agency websites for useful contracting information, events and opportunities**
- **Network! Network! Network!**

Top Ten Federal Spenders

The Federal Government spends billions annually in the acquisition of goods and services. Use the websites to find out more about these agencies.

- Department of Defense – www.dod.gov
- Department of Energy – www.doe.gov
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration – www.nasa.gov
- Department of Veterans Affairs – www.va.gov
- General Services Administration – www.gsa.gov
- Department of Health And Human Services – www.hhs.gov
- Department of Agriculture – www.usda.gov
- Department of Justice – www.usdoj.gov
- Department of the Interior – www.interior.gov
- Department of Education – www.ed.gov

Keys to Successful Contracting

- Attend training sessions on obtaining contracts with the Federal Government
- Conduct market research to identify potential customers, end-users and competitors
- Assess your ability to compete in the Federal marketplace
- Identify current contract holders in your industry for partnering and teaming opportunities
- Respond to solicitations from www.fbo.gov
- Look at historical data and ask questions
- Submit your proposal and other required information before the due date — follow all instructions
- Attend agency conferences, workshops and seminars
- Use Federal information resources to identify events and opportunities
- Gain an understanding of the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) by visiting www.arnet.gov/far
- Monitor the award process by checking status regularly
- Request a debriefing in writing within three days if an offer is not accepted

Contracting Resources

The Small Business Administration (SBA) provides information to all categories of business. Some of the information provided by SBA includes, SBA office locator, financial consultation, training and much more – www.sba.gov

FedBizOpps is the online resource for Federal solicitations and other business opportunities – www.fbo.gov

FirstGov is an easy, one-stop access to all online Federal Government resources with keyword search capability – www.firstgov.gov

Service Corps Of Retired Executives (SCORE) aids in formation, growth, and success of small business – www.score.org

Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) provide management, finance and planning support – www.sba.gov/sbdc/sbdcnear.html

The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) provides access to markets, capital, assistance, training and more – www.mbda.gov

The Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) promotes contracting activity between small business, prime Government contractors, and the Government - www.dla.mil/db/procurem.htm

GSA's Federal Supply Service (FSS), Public Buildings Service (PBS), and Federal Technology Service (FTS) provides information on all GSA Business Lines. www.gsa.gov/fss, www.gsa.gov/pbs, www.gsa.gov/fts respectively.

The Vendor Support Center is a special place for getting GSA Schedule sales information, links to important downloads and more – www.gsa.gov/vsc

Office of Management and Budget has information on Federal spending and other valuable items of interest – <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/index.html>

SBA's SUB-Net is an excellent resource for marketing and business opportunities – <http://web.sba.gov/subnet>

GSA Advantage! is the one-stop online shopping service developed by GSA for Federal customers. e-Buy, a benefit of *GSA Advantage!*, allows Federal customers to request quotes from contractors who are registered on *Advantage!* www.gsaadvantage.gov

Network, Network, Network...

Points to Consider for Optimizing Growth Opportunities with the Government

- Be innovative
- Practice quality management
- Invest in human capital
- Provide superior customer service
- Ensure financial soundness
- Practice social responsibility
- Employ technology to:
 - Reduce cost
 - Reduce inventory
 - Speed product delivery
- Create value for customers, employees and suppliers by identifying what value means to each group
- Be flexible and seek out new markets
- Participate in conferences, expos, workshops and seminars
- Accept Government Purchase Cards for amounts that exceed the minimum requirement

Government Purchase Card

The Government purchase card is an easy way for Federal purchasers to make small and large buys. Acceptance of this card provides a convenient source for Federal buyers to obtain services and products through alternative purchasing options.

GSA SmartPay Contractors

- Citibank 888-241-1514, 800-790-7206; <http://www.citimanager.com>
- Bank of America 800-472-1424; <http://bankofamerica.com/government>
- Bank One 888-297-0782, <https://onecard.bankone.com>
- US Bank 202-872-0850, www.usbank.com/impac
- Mellon Bank 412-236-6039, <http://www.mellon.com/inst/cards/gsa>

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)



FAQ's

1. What is the difference between Federal Supply Schedules, Solicitations, GSA Contracts, and GSA Multiple Award Schedules etc?

- **The GSA Schedule Program or Federal Supply Schedules Program** is the name of a procurement program under the Federal Acquisition Service of the General Services Administration, whereby GSA awards contracts to vendors who want to sell their products or services to the Government at a discounted price. It is designed to provide Government customers with access to products and/or services at a fair and reasonable price.
- **GSA Schedules** are the groupings of commodities or services identified under the program. These GSA Schedules or groups represent more than four million products and services. The number of GSA Schedules may increase or decrease as groups of similar products/services are combined or separated for better identification when needed. Both a number and a title identify each group. There are also Special Item Numbers (SINs) under each schedule number and title that represents the different items for that group. A company may submit its offer for a contract under the GSA Schedule number and title that matches their product and/or service group, then the item number that matches the particular products or services under that group. A company may submit an offer for a contract that includes one or more items in that group. Please see below for examples:

Schedule 23V (GSA Schedule group or number)

Vehicular Multiple Award Schedule (VMAS) (title or product/service category)

SIN 023 LSV Low Speed Vehicles, Gas... (item)

SIN 272 106 Remanufactured Engines...(item)

- **Solicitations** are the documents issued by agencies to request proposal submission from vendors selling their products and/or services. Solicitations are used by most Government agencies to procure products and/or services. In the case of GSA's Schedule Program, the solicitation is directly connected to a specific GSA Schedule noted in question 1 above. The vendor wanting to participate in the GSA Schedules Program, must submit the solicitation directly related to the GSA Schedule category that matches their business. In some cases, a vendor will be eligible to submit an offer under more than one solicitation because of the nature of their business. All GSA Schedule contracts are awarded through this solicitation process. There is no other way to get a GSA Contract under this Program.
- **GSA Contracts** are the end result of the contract award process. You receive a contract once you fill out and complete the solicitation document and submit that document as your offer to GSA. GSA will review, hold discussions for corrections and/or negotiations, and either award or reject your offer. If the offer is awarded, you will receive a contract number and a copy of your new GSA contract. The solicitation is incorporated into the contract document.

2. When do you need a GSA Schedule Contract?

You need a contract with GSA when you are trying to sell your products or services to Federal agencies who only want to buy products and/or services from GSA contract holders. GSA MAS are not mandatory but they are a preferred source of procurement for most government agencies.

3. What are the differences between GSA Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contracts, Governmentwide acquisition contracts (GWACs), and Multi-agency contracts (MACs)?

The following explanation identifies three different types of government contracts. The GSA Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contract is the only contract related to the GSA Schedules Program. However, this information is provided to encourage you to understand and seek other types of contracts with the government.

- **GSA Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contracts** are indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contracts available to all Federal agencies worldwide and some State and Local Government. GSA awards and administers GSA contracts pursuant to Title III of the Federal

Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 (41 USC 251, et. seq) and 40 USC 501. GSA enters into governmentwide contracts with commercial firms to provide millions of commercial services and products. Agencies place orders directly with GSA contractors. Interagency agreements are not required to use GSA contracts. The Economy Act does not apply to orders placed against GSA contracts.

- **Governmentwide acquisition contracts (GWACS)** are task order or delivery order contracts for information technology established by one agency for governmentwide use. Each GWAC is operated by an executive agent designated by the Office of Management and Budget pursuant to section 5112(e) of the Clinger-Cohen Act. The Economy Act does not apply to orders under GWACs.
- **Multi-agency contracts (MACs)** are task order or delivery order contracts established by one agency for use by government agencies to obtain a variety of supplies and services. The Economy Act [Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 17.5] applies to orders placed under MACs, with the exception of MACs for information technology that are established pursuant to the Clinger-Cohen Act.

4. Who is eligible to use GSA Schedule contracts?

GSA's Source of Supply – GSA Order ADM 4800.2E, 1/3/2000

- Executive & Other Federal Agencies
- Mixed-Ownership Government Corporation (FDIC, Federal Home Loan Banks, etc.)
- The District of Columbia
- Cost Reimbursable Government Contractors authorized in writing by a Federal agency (48 CFR 51.1)
- State and Local Government for Information Technology through Cooperative Purchasing.
www.gsa.gov/cooperativepurchasing

5. How does GSA determine if vendors are offering prices that are fair and reasonable to Federal Customers?

GSA's goal is to be the best value supplier of choice.

MAS contracts are negotiated with the goal of obtaining "most favored customer" pricing/discounts. This means the pricing is based on the category of customer receiving the best discount from our vendors. GSA's goal is to acquire equal to or better than that discount off the contractors commercial price list.

6. How easy is it for customers to purchase from GSA Schedule contracts compared to procurement on the open market?

Purchasing from MAS contracts offers the following advantages over procuring on the open market:

- GSA has determined prices under MAS contracts to be fair and reasonable.
- Synopses are not required for MAS purchases.
- MAS contracts have been awarded in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Administrative time is reduced.
- MAS contracts offer a wide selection of state-of-the-art commercial services and products.

7. What is the difference between customers ordering products or ordering services from a GSA contractor?

Both FAR 8.405-1 and 8.405-2 are designed to simplify the acquisition process.

- **For orders of services and/or products up to the micro-purchase threshold:** An agency can place the order with any vendor.
- **For orders above the micro-purchase threshold but below the maximum order threshold:**
 - *Services Requiring a Statement of Work:* The agency must prepare a request for quotes that includes the statement of work; transmit the request to at least three GSA Schedule contractors; evaluate responses; and make a best value selection.

- *Products and Services That Do Not Require a Statement of Work:* The agency must review the *GSA Advantage!* online shopping service or at least three GSA Schedule contractors' pricelists; evaluate; and make a best value selection.
- **For orders exceeding the maximum order threshold:**
 - *Services Requiring a Statement of Work:* The agency will follow the same procedures for orders above the micro-purchase threshold, except transmit the request for quotes to additional GSA Schedule contractors; seek price reductions; evaluate responses; and make a best value selection.
 - *Products and Services That Do Not Require a Statement of Work:* The agency will follow the same procedures for orders above the micro-purchase threshold, except review additional GSA Schedule contractors' pricelists or use the *GSA Advantage!* online shopping service; seek price reductions; evaluate; and make a best value selection.

Note: For orders of services exceeding \$100,000 using Department of Defense (DOD) funds, the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) has been amended in Section 208.404 to implement Section 803 of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2002 (Public Law 107-107). DOD offices and non-DOD activities placing orders on behalf of DOD should refer to DFARS 208.404 and 208.404-70 for additional information regarding ordering procedures and documentation requirements.

8. **What is *GSA Advantage!* and are all GSA Schedule contractors required to participate?**

- ***GSA Advantage!*** is an online shopping and ordering system that includes services and products under all of the GSA Multiple Award Schedules. With over 3.2 million services and products currently available, electronic ordering through *GSA Advantage!* allows a customer to send an order directly to the GSA Schedule contractor, creating a direct customer-contractor relationship. For services that require a statement of work, a customer cannot order such services directly through *GSA Advantage!* The customer must create the order through the ordering agency's internal system.
- ALL GSA Schedule contractors must be registered with *GSA Advantage!*

9. What is e-Buy?

GSA's latest e-Business innovation, e-Buy, simplifies the acquisition process! e-Buy, which is a component of *GSA Advantage!*, is an electronic Request for Quote (RFQ) system designed to allow buyers to prepare RFQ's directly on-line, for a wide-range of services and products offered through Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) program. e-Buy allows RFQ's and quotes to be exchanged electronically between Federal buyers and Schedule contractors. Have you looked into e-Buy lately? To receive further information on e-Buy, you can research the web @ <http://www.ebuy.gsa.gov> (703)-305-5537 fax

10. Is the GSA Schedule designed to meet all customer needs? How can a GSA Schedule contractor add items a customer needs?

With over four million commercial services and products available, GSA Schedules can meet the vast majority of a customer's needs. For those large or complex requirements, GSA contractors may join with other GSA Schedule contract holders and submit a total solution to meet a customer's needs under a Contractor Team Arrangement (CTA). GSA contractors may request that their contracts be modified at any time during the contract period to add new services and products to meet a customer's requirements. The modification process also ensures that the latest technology is always available to the customer. GSA Schedule contract periods are as long as five years with three five-year option periods to provide for continued sources of services and products. Most GSA Schedule solicitations have continuous open seasons, which enables companies to submit offers at any time and further ensures that customers have, not only a variety of services and products to meet their requirements, but also the latest technology available in the commercial marketplace.

11. Can items NOT awarded to the GSA Schedule contractor be included on a GSA Schedule order?

For items being sold by a contractor that are not on their GSA Schedule contract, but are within scope of the GSA Schedule contract, the contractor may seek to add the items through a modification to the contract. However, the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) has been amended to incorporate policies that address the handling of open market items.

Note: Open market items are also known as incidental items, non-contract items, non-Schedule items, and items not on a GSA Schedule contract.

In accordance with FAR 8.402(f), for administrative convenience, an ordering office contracting officer may add items not on the Federal Supply Schedule (Multiple Award Schedule) contract—i.e., open market items—to a Federal Supply Schedule blanket purchase agreement (BPA) or an individual task or delivery order **only if**:

1. All applicable acquisition regulations pertaining to the purchase of the items not on the Federal Supply Schedule contract have been followed (e.g., publicizing (Part 5), competition requirements (Part 6), acquisition of commercial items (Part 12), contracting methods (Parts 13, 14, and 15), and small business programs (Part 19);
2. The ordering office contracting officer has determined the price for the items not on the Federal Supply Schedule contract is fair and reasonable;
3. The items are clearly labeled on the order as items not on the Federal Supply Schedule contract; and
4. All clauses applicable to items not on the Federal Supply Schedule contract are included in the order.

12. Sometimes Federal customers need delivery right away. What kind of delivery options does a contractor have under the GSA Schedule program?

Commercial practice is encouraged under this program. MAS contracts have the same delivery times as the GSA Schedule contractors' commercial delivery times. MAS contracts may also contain expedited delivery terms, or customers may request expedited delivery to meet their requirements.

13. What is a Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) under a GSA Schedule contract? Are there any dollar limitations when establishing BPAs?

A BPA is a simplified method of filling recurring needs for services and products, while leveraging the customer's buying power by taking advantage of quantity discounts, saving administrative time, and

reducing paperwork. A BPA is an “account” established by a customer with a GSA Schedule contractor. MAS BPAs are authorized by FAR 13.303-2(c)(3).

With a BPA customers can order as little as they want, as much as they want, and as often as they want. Customers are not restricted by any dollar limitations when placing orders under an MAS BPA. A BPA can be set up for field offices across the nation to use, thus allowing them to participate in a customer's BPA and place orders directly with GSA Schedule contractors. In doing so, the entire agency reaps the benefits of additional discounts negotiated into the BPA.

A BPA cannot exceed the contractor's GSA Schedule contract period. Customers will perform an annual review of each BPA to determine whether the BPA is still a “best value.”

Contractor Team Arrangements, which are permitted with GSA contractors in accordance with FAR 9.6, may be incorporated into a BPA.

14. Are GSA contractors required to accept the governmentwide commercial purchase card for payment?

Yes, GSA Schedule contractors are required to accept the purchase card for payments equal to or less than the micro-purchase threshold (\$2500). However, acceptance of the governmentwide commercial purchase card for all amounts that exceed this threshold is strongly encouraged. The use of the government credit card is preferred among most agencies due to its convenient payment method.

15. When a Federal customer places an order against my GSA contract, does it meet Competition in Contracting Act (CICA) requirements?

In accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 6.102(d)(3), use of the Multiple Award Schedules Program is considered a “competitive procedure” under CICA when the Schedule ordering procedures are followed; i.e., the ordering procedures in FAR 8.404 and the Ordering Procedures for Services (Requiring a Statement of Work).

16. What is a Contractor Team Arrangement (CTA) under the GSA Schedules Program?

A CTA under the MAS Program is an arrangement in which two or more GSA contractors join together to provide a total solution to meet a customer's needs.

Orders placed under a CTA are subject to the terms and conditions of each team member's GSA Schedule contract.

17. Are all products offered under GSA Schedule contracts compliant with the Trade Agreements Act?

Yes.

18. How does a Federal customer terminate an order with a GSA Schedule contractor?

In accordance with FAR 8.405, an ordering agency Contracting Officer may terminate an order for cause or for the convenience of the government. Such terminations shall comply with FAR 12.403. The GSA Contracting Officer shall be notified in all cases where an order has been terminated for cause or fraud is suspected.

19. If I have limited labor categories to offer for my GSA Schedules Contract, how can I add more labor categories at a later time?

Additional labor categories can be added through a modification process after your contract has been awarded.

20. Where can I obtain more information regarding GSA Multiple Award Schedules?

To view a wealth of information on GSA Multiple Award Schedules and other programs, register at the FSS Center for Acquisition Excellence. www.gsa.gov/centerforacquisitionexcellence

21. What are some relevant details about this program that will help me be an informed GSA Schedule vendor?

GSA Schedule contractors:

1. Have adequate financial resources to perform the contract, or the ability to obtain them.
2. Are able to comply with the required or proposed delivery or performance GSA Schedule, taking into consideration all existing commercial and governmental business commitments.
3. Have a satisfactory performance record.
4. Have a satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics.
5. Have excellent organization, experience, accounting and operational controls, and technical skills, or the ability to obtain them.
6. Have the necessary production, construction, and technical equipment and facilities, or the ability to obtain them.

ALL GSA Schedule Contracts are Indefinite-Delivery-Indefinite-Quantity (IDIQ)

GSA Schedule contracts provide delivery of an indefinite quantity of products or services. Ordering activities place orders under the contract for individual requirements. GSA's Schedule IDIQ contracts state that the Government must order at least the dollar amount identified as the minimum order threshold. However, there is no overall contract maximum and an individual order can exceed the maximum order (MO) threshold as long as the contractor accepts the order. The MO is simply used to flag a point in the order where negotiations were not extended. Federal agencies are encouraged to request further discounts when exceeding this level of order. The contractor is never obligated to accept a request for additional discounts. However, the agency may choose to search for better value from another source.

GSA Schedule Offerors Must Have Fair and Reasonable Pricing

Every responsible offeror is capable of receiving an award if they meet solicitation requirements and the prices are fair and reasonable. Vendors are not competing with each other for a GSA Schedule contract.

Instead, the Contracting Officer will assure that each offer is fair and reasonable based on the Contracting Officer's understanding of the market and the information submitted by the vendor. The pricing objective is generally to achieve pricing comparable to that offered the vendor's most favored customer. The resulting contracts are considered competitive because the pricing and service and/or product descriptions are molded by the competition of the commercial marketplace.

Offerors Need Estimated Sales Necessary to Justify a GSA Schedule Contract Award

The Contracting Officer will use available information to evaluate estimated annual offeror sales under the proposed contract. A contract will not be awarded unless anticipated sales are expected to exceed \$25,000 within the first 24 months following contract award, and are expected to exceed \$25,000 in sales each 12-month period thereafter. The Government may cancel the contract in accordance with clause 552.238-73, Cancellation, unless reported sales are at the specified levels.

Other Relevant Issues to the Offeror

The Contracting Officer will consider other issues related to negotiating a contract that will provide a win/win GSA Schedule relationship. For example, the Contracting Officer should assure that the GSA Schedule contractor is aware of its responsibility to report the dollar value of all sales under the contract by calendar quarter and remit an industrial funding fee (IFF) based on reported sales.

The IFF is the fee customer agencies pay to FSS to administer the GSA Schedules Program. The fee is collected by contractors as part of the GSA Schedule price, and then passed back to FSS through a quarterly reporting and remittance mechanism, which is described later. The rate itself is established by the Commissioner of FSS and is not negotiable. At the conclusion of negotiations, both the FSS negotiator and the vendor acknowledge that the price agreed upon includes the IFF as the designated percentage of the GSA Schedule price. Reported GSA Schedule sales include the IFF. The net price to the vendor on any GSA Schedule sale will be the negotiated price less the IFF percentage of the GSA Schedule price. The IFF is not invoiced as a separate line item.

GSA Awards a GSA Schedule Contract

The GSA Contracting Officer will assure that the GSA Schedule contract meets all the requirements of law and regulation. By doing so, the Contracting Officer relieves the GSA Schedule user of that responsibility each time a GSA Schedule order is issued. Before making an award, the Contracting Officer will assure that:

- The vendor is responsible;
- The pricing of the services or products covered by the contract is fair and reasonable;
- Agreement has been reached on all other contract terms and conditions;
- All necessary signatures have been obtained;
- The contract file is properly documented; and
- Any other necessary actions relating to contract award have been completed.

22. How does the Veterans Administration provide medical related contracts through the General Services Administration Schedules Program and what are some of the differences?

Medical Services and Product GSA Schedules

Under a special agreement, GSA has delegated management responsibility for medical services and products on GSA Schedule to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). To learn more about GSA Schedule contracting for medical services and products, go to the VA Office of Acquisition and Materiel Management (OA&MM) Federal Supply Schedule Service website.

VAOA&MM is responsible for establishing, soliciting, awarding, and administering the VA's Federal Supply Schedule Program. Their GSA Schedules encompass such products as *pharmaceuticals; medical equipment and supplies; dental supplies; x-ray equipment and supplies (including medical and dental x-ray film); patient mobility devices (including wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, etc.); antiseptic skin cleansers, detergents and soaps; invitro diagnostics, reagents, test kits and sets; and clinical analyzers, laboratory cost-*

per-test. There are a total of over 1,200 contracts in place for the various commodity groups. Annual sales against these contracts exceed \$2 billion. All Federal Supply Schedule contracts are multiple award, indefinite delivery-indefinite quantity type, and are national in scope. These contracts are available for use by all Government agencies including but not limited to: VA medical centers, Department of Defense, Bureau of Prisons, Indian Health Services, Public Health Services, some State Veterans Homes, etc. Performance periods can be established up to five years in length. Delegated to the VA by the General Services Administration over 30 years ago, VA Federal Supply Schedule contract and representative information may be accessed via the General Services Administration Schedules e-Library (<http://www.gsaelibrary.gsa.gov/elib/eLibrary.jsp>).

Pertinent Terms and Conditions for these GSA Schedules include:

- No maximum order limitations
- Lower prices may be negotiated by individual users
- All Federal agencies in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches are authorized users

Advantages for the customers:

- Commercial Items
- Provides choices on products, terms and conditions, delivery and payment options
- Flexibility
- State-of-the Art Technology
- Ability to establish Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs)

Under the Federal Supply Schedule Program and within each awarded contract is the provision for Blanket Purchase Agreements or BPAs. This provision allows any customer at the local, regional, or national level to negotiate and establish a BPA with a FSS contractor for a committed volume (based on quantity level or dollar volume), for a specified period of time (not to exceed performance period of contract), in exchange for additional price consideration, as well as additional value-added programs and services. Many of the programs are negotiated for specific customer groups under the FSS program depending upon tracking requirements and interest within a customer group. For a listing of some

current negotiated Incentive Programs under the FSS Pharmaceutical contracts, refer to the Incentive Program Listing.

Under the Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) Program, State Veterans Homes (SVH) with approved and executed sharing agreements now are considered authorized users of the FSS contracts and are entitled to purchase from these contracts, just like any other authorized FSS user. For more specific information regarding this program, please contact the VA office on (708) 786-7663 or (708) 786-5174. For a listing of those SVH's which have authorization to buy off the FSS for pharmaceuticals; antiseptic skin cleansers, detergents and dispensers; and invitro diagnostics, reagents, test kits and test sets, refer to the State Veteran Home Listing with approved Sharing Agreements.

23. What are some tips to getting a contract awarded quickly through GSA?

The following information will help you identify some key steps to expediting the award process:

1. Before you submit your offer:
 - a. Make sure you fill in all blanks. If something is not applicable please insert "N/A" or "Not Applicable" in the appropriate space.
 - b. As mentioned before, please locate Standard Form 1449 in the solicitation. Once you have located the form, see below:
 - Blocks 7a and b identify the point of contact to answer questions as you fill out the solicitation. If you have questions, write them down as you go through your offer and ask them all at one time.
 - Block 9 will identify the GSA address where you will mail your offer or directions where to find the address.
 - Blocks 30a and b **MUST** be signed to finalize your offer before submission. If these blocks are not signed, your offer may be returned to you.

2. Once you submit your offer, allow at least two weeks before checking the status. Ask questions like:
 - a. Which Contract Specialist was assigned my offer?
 - b. What is the average timeframe that an award can be expected for this product/service?
 - c. Is there anything more you need from my company to expedite the award?
 - d. Can I receive emails or phone calls in addition to a letter if there is a discrepancy?
3. Make sure if you are asked for additional information that you respond as soon as possible, preferably the same day.
4. If you have an agency that is looking to purchase from you once you are a GSA Schedule contract holder, have them write a letter to GSA AFTER you have submitted your offer and been notified of receipt. The letter should...
 - a. Be addressed to the same address in Block 9 of the SF 1449
 - b. Show attention to the Contract Specialist working on your offer
 - c. Have the agency's letterhead
 - d. State the details (cost, items, delivery requirement etc.) of the buy they are planning to make.
 - e. Have the signature of the ordering authority

Using good judgment in communication like what to say, how often to call, personal visits and other efforts is very important.





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Office of Small Business Utilization

www.gsa.gov/smallbusiness
www.gsa.gov/schedules